

Congressman Childers Announces Ability to Sign Up for Emergency Education Benefit Payments on VA Web Site this Friday

□

October 1, 2009

Washington, DC – Congressman Travis Childers (D-MS) today announced further outreach to Mississippi's student veterans eligible for a special emergency payment of their Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits. Veterans can now apply online beginning October 2nd. Student veterans can also request courtesy transportation to VA regional benefits offices.

“Our veterans have made great sacrifices to protect our country. It is essential that they have access to the quality, affordable education they need to earn a living upon their return home,” said Congressman Childers. “Two weeks ago, I was proud to introduce an amendment to the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA) to increase student veterans' college completion rates. Providing emergency education payments this month is another step in the right direction towards ensuring that veterans are able to take full advantage of the training and education benefits they've earned. The Jackson VA benefits office is several hours from most towns in Mississippi's First District, but because of today's announcement, student veterans will be able to more easily access these significant benefits.”

Last week, the VA announced that on Friday, Oct. 2, its 57 regional benefits offices will begin providing on-the-spot emergency payments up to \$3,000 to students who have applied for their education benefits but who have not yet received a government payment.

Many Mississippi veterans who would have had to travel long distances to apply in person at the Jackson VA benefits office will now be able to apply online at www.va.gov starting Oct. 2. The online application will guide veterans through the process to supply needed information. The online applicants will receive their emergency payments through the mail after processing.

Students without their own transportation can also request free van service, provided by volunteers, to carry them to the nearest benefits office. To obtain this service, veterans should call their nearest VA medical center and ask for the "Volunteer Transportation Coordinator." Transportation will be on a first-come, first-served, space-available basis. Mississippi veterans can find a map and list of medical centers at <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?State=MS&dnum=ALL>

Whether traveling by personal vehicle or volunteer van, VA officials suggest students check their mail boxes and banking accounts before leaving home, since some veterans will find their checks have already arrived.

The emergency checks are an advance on each student's education benefits, and the amount will be deducted from future benefits payments. Checks will be written at the regional offices for veterans who bring a photo ID and evidence of their enrollment. A \$3,000 payment is the maximum in emergency education benefits, with many veterans receiving smaller payments based upon their likely monthly education benefits.

A map and list of the participating VA regional benefits offices in Mississippi is available online at <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?STATE=MS&dnum=3> . The most updated information regarding VA issuing emergency checks will be available VA's Web site

www.va.gov
starting October 1
st

A pro-gun, pro-life Mississippian, Congressman Travis Childers (D-MS) represents the First Congressional District in North Mississippi. He is a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition and serves on the House Agriculture and Financial Services Committee. Congressman Childers co-chairs the reestablished bipartisan Congressional Rural Caucus and was appointed to the bipartisan Second Amendment Task Force. For more information, visit www.childers.house.gov

#